

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A unitary foam packing element, comprising:

a planar piece of foam, said piece of foam being precut with a plurality of score lines;

5           said score lines define a first planar portion and a second planar portion, said score lines enabling said first planar portion to be folded over onto said second planar portion to thereby form a flat cavity between said first planar portion and said second planar portion; and

10           said score lines further define an end panel adjacent the second planar portion, said end panel being adapted to be folded along a respective one of said score lines so as to form a first end wall of said flat cavity.

2. The unitary foam packing element of claim 1, wherein said score lines further define an intermediate portion between said first planar portion and said second planar portion, said intermediate portion forming a second end wall of said flat cavity that is opposite said first end wall.

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3. The unitary foam packing element of claim 1, wherein the score lines further define first and second side panels, the score lines enabling the first and second side panels to be folded along respective ones of the score lines so as to form side walls of the flat cavity.

20   4. The unitary foam packing element of claim 2, wherein the score lines further define first and second side panels, the score lines enabling the first and second side panels to be folded along respective ones of the score lines so as to form side walls of the flat cavity.

5. The unitary foam packing element of claim 1, wherein the score lines further define one or more openings in the single planar piece of foam when said first planar portion is folded over onto said second planar portion.
- 5 6. The unitary foam packing element of claim 5, wherein the score lines further define one or more insert pieces that can be separated from the single planar piece of foam and inserted into the one or more openings to reduce an effective size of the flat cavity.
- 10 7. The unitary foam packing element of claim 6, wherein said score lines defining said end panel include a tab creating segment so that when the end panel is folded so as to form the first end wall, at least one cutout region exists adjacent the first end wall.
- 15 8. The unitary foam packing element of claim 1, wherein the score lines further define one or more insert pieces that can be separated from the planar piece of foam and inserted into the at least one cutout region to reduce an effective size of the planar cavity.
9. The unitary foam packing element of claim 2, wherein the score lines which define at least one of the first and second side panels include a tab creating segment so that when the at least one side panel is folded into the respective side wall, at least one cutout region exists adjacent the respective side wall.
- 20 10. The unitary foam packing element of claim 7, wherein the score lines further define one or more insert pieces that can be separated from the planar piece of foam and inserted into the at least one cutout region to reduce an effective size of the planar cavity.

11. A unitary foam packing element, comprising:

a single planar piece of foam which is precut with a plurality of score lines to define:

5 a first planar portion and a second planar portion, the score lines enabling the first planar portion to be folded over onto the second planar portion to form a flat cavity between the first planar portion and the second planar portion;

10 the score lines further defining an end panel adjacent the second planar portion, which end panel is adapted to be folded along a respective one of the fold lines so as to form a first end wall of the flat cavity;

the single planar piece of foam further including an intermediate portion between the first planar portion and the second planar portion, the intermediate portion forming a second end wall of the flat cavity that is opposite the first end wall when the first planar portion is folded over onto the second planar portion;

15 the score lines further defining first and second side panels, the score lines enabling the first and second side panels to be folded along respective ones of the score lines so as to form side walls of the flat cavity;

20 each of the score lines defining the end panel and the side panels including at least one tab creating segment so that when the end panel is folded into the first end wall and when the side panels are folded into the side walls, at least one cutout region exists adjacent the first end wall and each of the side walls;

the score lines further define one or more insert pieces that can be separated from the single planar piece of foam and inserted into the one or more cutout regions to reduce an effective size of the flat cavity.

25 12. The unitary foam packing element of claim 11, wherein said plurality of score lines include a plurality of first score lines and a plurality of second score lines, said first score lines defining a cut through an entire thickness of said single

planar piece of foam and said second score lines defining a cut through a portion of the thickness of said single planar piece of foam.

13. A method of forming a packing element from a single planar piece of foam which is precut with a plurality of score lines defining a first planar portion, a second planar portion, and an end panel adjacent the second planar portion, the method comprising:

folding the first planar portion over onto the second planar portion to form a flat cavity between the first planar portion and the second planar portion; and

folding the end panel along a respective one of the fold lines so as to form a first end wall of the flat cavity.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising forming a second end wall from an intermediate portion between the first planar portion and the second planar portion, the second end wall being opposite the first end wall.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the score lines further define first and second side panels, and further comprising folding the first and second side panels along respective ones of the score lines so as to form side walls of the flat cavity.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein each of the score lines defining the end panel and the side panels including at least one tab creating segment, so that when the end panel is folded into the first end wall and when the side panels are folded into the side walls, at least one cutout region exists adjacent the first end wall and each of the side walls.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the score lines further define one or more insert pieces that can be separated from the single planar piece of foam, and

further comprising separating the insert pieces from the single planar piece of foam, and inserting the insert pieces into the one or more cutout regions to reduce an effective size of the flat cavity.